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Hedgerow and Lane

Charles H. Doing

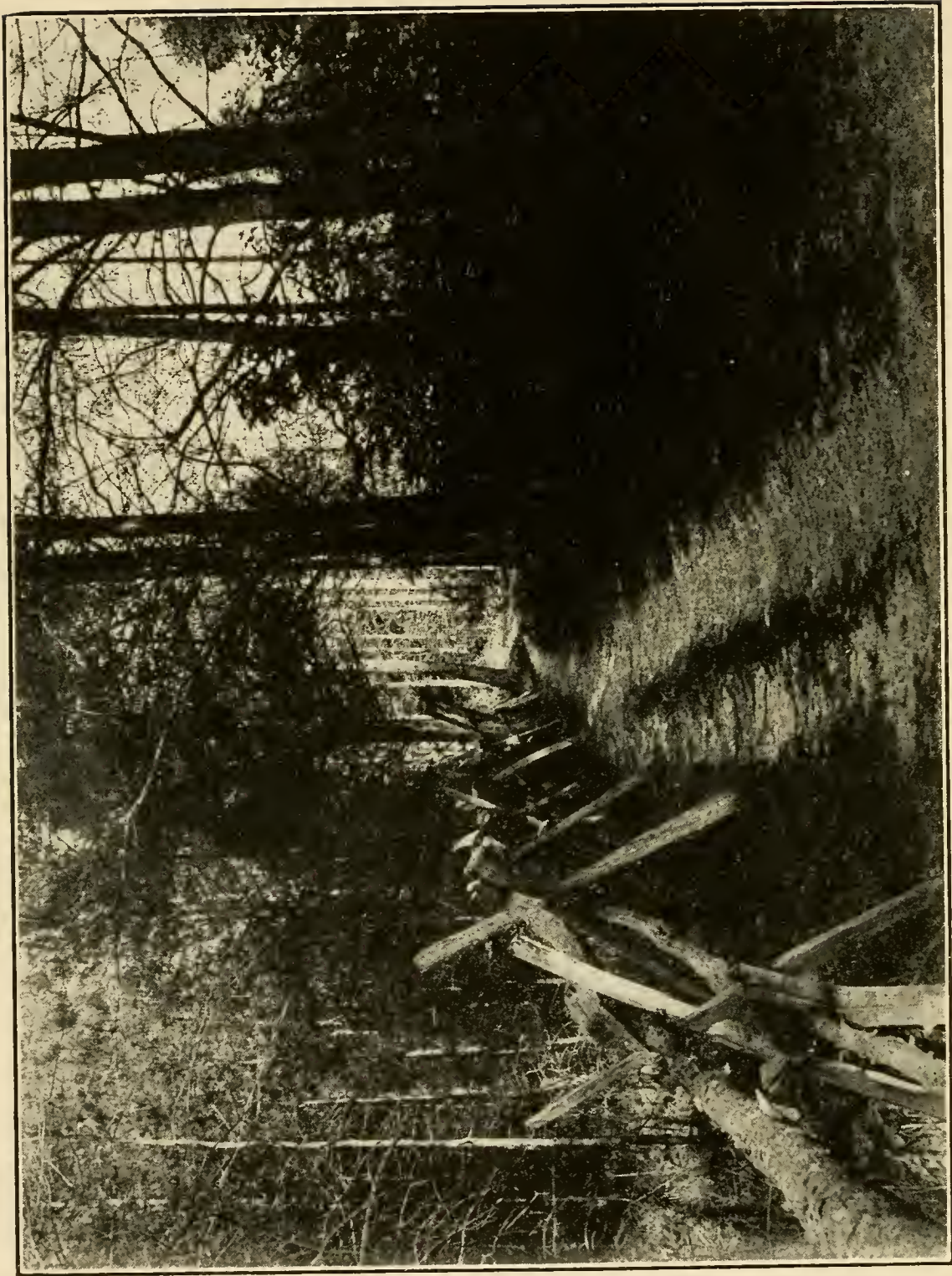


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BROWN THRUSH LANE.

SONGS
OF
Hedgerow and Lane

By CHARLES H. DOING



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TO MY OLDEST AND BEST FRIEND,
A FRIEND OF
ALMOST SIXTY YEARS, THE
HONORABLE JOB BARNARD,
I MOST RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBE THESE VERSES.

PRELUDE.

The reason why I love the jay
Is, that when come, he's here to stay
Through every kind of weather;
From spring to fall, from fall to spring,
You'll see the color of his wing,
And hear him try his best to sing
With birds of every feather.

And if his notes be not so fine
In quality, he'll not repine,
Nor droop his jaunty crest.
Like him who weaves these simple lays,
He sings not for the critic's praise,
But, for those threading life's by-ways,
He sings and sings his best.

All song birds can not linnets be
To fill the groves with melody
The long bright summer through.
Nor can the low-voiced yellow throat
Reach to the mock'bird's highest note,
Yet who would for his silence vote,
Because his songs are few?

The bird that sings 'neath sunny skies,
Midst summer flowers of brightest dyes,
Sings when his heart is gay.
But when stern winter's trumpets blow,
And earth lies hid 'neath drifts of snow,
Seek for your singer then, and, lo!
You'll only find the jay.

And, so I say, I love the jay,
The bird who sings when skies are gray,
And all the landscape drear.
Though some will call his song a whine,
And say it much resembles mine,
His fond mate thinks his notes divine,
Soft, tender, full and clear.

'NEATH TRAILING WILLOWS.

Kind Fate, put me down by the soft-flowing stream,
Where the willow-boughs trail and the pebbled sands
gleam;
Where the grapevine and alders in green clusters grow,
And the birch o'er the waters their long shadows throw.

On the green mossy bank 'neath the long willow-boughs,
While the plover's clear notes the soft echoes arouse;
Where the mourning dove's call wakes the hawk's
strident scream,
Let me rest till I slumber, and slumbering dream.

Let me dream away sorrow, misfortune, and care,
That have furrowed my forehead and whitened my
hair;
Dream the years that I've wasted in folly well spent;
Dream doubt and regret into heart-eased content.

Within this charmed circle that hedges around
The valley's perfume and the water's sweet sound,
Where the sorrowing willows weep over the stream,
Let me rest till I slumber, and slumbering dream.

MY WOODLAND PATH.

How well I know my woodland path,
Its greenings and its aftermath,
Its windings and its vistas dim
That stretch beyond the forest's rim;
Its fragrance in the wild rose time,
Its mingled scent of fern and thyme,
That rise like incense where I tread
At purple dawn or sunset red.
I know its leafy coverts where
The brown thrush and the cat birds are;
And where in spring with joy are heard
The first notes of the mocking bird,
And all the blithe bards of the wood,
In roundel, rune and interlude.
I know where emerald mosses edge
Its ribboned course through briar and sedge;
Where partridge berries shine between
The clustered leaves of wintergreen;
And where the morning sun breaks through
The cedar boughs to drink the dew.
And there at noon on languid wing
The wanton breeze goes wandering.
I know its cradle hollows deep,
Where winterlong the violets sleep,
Quiescent till the gales of spring
Blow off their leafy covering.
I know its restful shady spots,
Its turnings where it runs 'cross-lots
And skirts the meadow's grassy edge,
'Neath fringe of wild flowers in the hedge.
So well I know its time-worn mark
My feet will trace it in the dark;
And, from its source to where it ends,
I love it as I love my friends.

THE HEDGE-ROWS OF MAY.

The hedge-rows of May, the green hedge-rows of May,
Where blithe feathered songsters assemble each day;
Or, maybe, they sleep there, and start with the gray
Dusky light of the morning, to warble away
The dew-diamond dawn, in the hedge-rows of May.

In the hedge-rows of May, what pranks they do play.
Those bards of the air, when the dark rolls away;
What tunes and sweet runes does the brown thrush
essay;
What music unwritten, what lyrics they lay
At the portals of dawn, from the hedge-rows of May.

In the hedge-rows of May, what an endless array
Of sweet-scented flowers, to be had without pay;
What eglantine wreaths, and what elder blooms gay;
What chinquapin plumes that flutter and sway
Like miniature flags in the breezes of May.

And the hedge-rows of May, what harbors are they
For little gray rabbits that scamper and play
Through the vine-braided bottoms where brown spar-
rows lay
Their wee, speckled eggs, and the moles in the clay
Go nosing around in a blind-folded way.

The hedge-rows of May, the green hedge-rows of May!
What sweeter retreat can be found at mid-day,
When the tired head aches, and we shrink from the fray,
And we feel as we steal from the turmoil away,
'Tis a safe place to rest, and a good place to pray.

'TWIXT THE ASTER AND THE ROSE.

There's a falling off of singers
In my temple in the grove,
There's a dearth of golden wingers
By my pathway through the cove;
And I miss the tuneful chorus
Of the birds of balmy May,
Their maze of song uproar'ous
That welcomed in the day.

Now and then a glint of splendor
From the grosbeak's crimson wing,
And a gush of music tender,
When he condescends to sing,
Greets my eye and charms my ear.
But my pleasure fainter grows
When I think there's half a year
'Twixt the aster and the rose.

There's a melancholy muttering
In the gloomy swaying pine;
There's a vague, uneasy fluttering
Of the blue jays in the vine.
Gone the wild flowers from the meadow,
And the stream in silence flows,
For there's winter's somber shadow
'Twixt the aster and the rose.

But 'neath warmer skies and brighter
Birds are singing merrily,
And my heart grows warm and lighter
For the sun shines cheerily.
Though the summer flowers must perish
And sleep 'neath winter snows,
We have still our hopes to cherish
'Twixt the aster and the rose.

A SONG OF LITTLE THINGS.

The blackbird started in to sing,
In his best voice, a roundelay;
He called his song, "An Ode to Spring,"
And claimed for it the right of way.

But other members of the choir
Voted the blackbird's claim absurd—
Thought him presumptuous to aspire
To flights of song as yet unheard.

But red-wing, warming to his theme,
Trilled his clear notes to nature true;
Soft-flowing as the purling stream
That wound the fragrant meadows through.

He sang of trifles, light as air,
Of little things that round him lay;
The common things that everywhere
Go all unheeded through life's day.

The shepherd's purse was in his song;
And myriad flowers that decked the mead;
The nameless and unnumbered throng,
As common as the humblest weed.

The magic of his roundelay
Transfigured every little thing;
The meanest flower beside the way
Took on the brightest hues of spring.

The wind-flower felt its spell, and turned
Its dew-damp petals to the sun;
The blood root's heart with rapture burned;
The bluets bowed to every one.

His numbers echoed down the glen
And woke responses from the trees;
His message was to humble men,
Who caught their music from the breeze.

His voice grew tender when he sung
Of withered hopes and vain desire;
Of aspirations bright, that sprung,
But faltered, wanting genius' fire.

But still he sings his blithesome songs,
Glad of the cheer the springtime brings;
And first among his lays belongs
The song made up of little things.

DREAMING.

Dreaming of willow banks on pebbled shore,
Where shim'ring birchen shadows lingering fall;
Where limpid waters over white sands pour,
And slumb'rous summer holds the scene in thrall.
There would I rest, from carking cares set free,
Leaving behind me trouble's pestering bane;
On mossy couch beneath some sheltering tree,
My sins forgotten and my doubts made plain.
Then let the world, oblivious of me,
Ignore my absence from the seething throng;
While wooing shadows 'neath my sheltering tree,
I'll hear with rapture every wild bird's song.

VIOLET-TIME.

It is the time of violets,
And every bank is dyed with blue,
'The time of year that rest begets
A longing for a closer view
Of Nature and her myriad charms.
By field and grove and vine-wreathed hedge,
To stand encircled by her arms,
And give Her Grace my loyal pledge.

To take long looks from sheltered heights
'Cross pastured plain and wooded glen,
Through vistas threading shade and light,
O'er hill and hollow, marsh and fen.
My senses breathing in the musk
Of wood perfume in every glade
And thicket, where at noon 'tis dusk,
So somber is the pine-trees' shade.

The dogwood blossoms white as snow,
Among the cedars and the pine,
Small flecks of white, that gleam and glow
Like lighted candles in a mine.
Leaves smaller than the squirrel's ear
Are just appearing on the oak,
But worlds of green will soon be here
To cheer the little forest folk.

Then by the stream to stand and hear
Its rippled music soft and low,
Gaze on its surface, deep and clear,
As her bright eyes were, long ago;
Dear eyes that years have sought to blur,
But memory keeps their sparkle yet,
And violet-time brings thought of her
And her bright eyes of violet.

THE WRENS.

Long years ago, one sunny day—
Alas, how dim and far away
That bright day now appears—
Companionless and lonely, I,
For pastime, watched the clouds go by,
As since have gone the years.

I wandered where the brook leaped down
Its rocky channel by the town
In foamy, ceaseless flow;
I saw wild pigeons rise and fly,
Like arrows, cleaving the bright sky,
Shot from an archer's bow.

I heard the wood dove's plaintive note,
As softly, from her burnished throat,
It melted on the breeze;
I heard the plover's joy-notes ring
Across the pasture, quavering,
And die among the trees.

Two little wrens were building near
Their downy nest, where every year
They came to build and sing;
They seemed to love the spot, and there,
Their tender song, soft as a prayer,
Breathed welcome to the spring.

The morning long I watched them weave,
With patient care, beneath the eave,
Their soft and downy home;
I heard them sing their tender lay,
Their song of hope, that some near day
Nestlings would to it come.

And I see now what then I saw
But vaguely, that one common law
Rules birds as well as men;
And glowing warm in every breast
Is that home-love, the first and best,
Which bids us build the dear home nest,
As doth the little wren.

BY THE PASTURE BARS.

Here in the lane by the pasture bars
I stand alone 'neath gath'ring stars,
And watch the sunset's after-light,
That floods the West with colors bright;
And here and there a patch of cloud,
Flares in the sky, like a vessel's shroud,
While trailing lines of fiery red
Dwindle away to amber thread;
And far above, like pigeons white,
Float myriad cloudlets, silver bright,
Growing darker as the distance grows,
'Till they pass from sight, like flocks of crows.
The wild flowers growing at my feet
Fill the soft air with odors sweet,
Blend with the perfume of the corn,
That sweetest fragrance, zephyr-borne;
Incense more rare no art could plan,
And dear to every husbandman.
Beyond the orchard on the hill,
The shrill note of the whip-poor-will,
Re-echoes over hill and dale,
To wake another in the swale.
Filled with the beauties of the scene,
Content of heart, with mind serene,
I linger still, with strange regret,
To leave a scene I'll ne'er forget.

BIRDS OF SPRING.

The cedar boughs on Vansville hill
Are vibrant with the bluebird's song,
And catbirds all the hedges fill
With their sweet music, clear and strong.

The blackbirds revel in the swale,
Their jubilees awake the grove;
And from the pasture calls the quail
In tender accents to his love.

The low strains of the turtle-dove
Like flute notes float upon the breeze;
Deep in the woods the bird of love,
The hermit thrush, sings to the trees.

The restless jay, with jaunty crown,
Pipes his weird notes that chafe the ear.
The mouse-like nuthatch heading down
The tree trunk plays his antics queer.

The gray mists of the April dawn
But half conceal the tuneful choir;
In orchard, meadow, grove and lawn
Their pipes pour forth a running fire.

So bent on music do they seem,
So lost to everything but song,
As ripples sing in mountain stream,
So flow their notes the spring day long.

Let spring come early or come late,
'Tis all one to my woodland bards;
Their art will make the crooked straight,
Their inspiration naught retards.

IN THE ORCHARD.

(INSCRIBED TO HELEN.)

Deep in the orchard where the bloom
Of clover scents the passing breeze;
Where glad-voiced children, romping, come
To play their games beneath the trees;
Where apple blossoms, pink and white,
In mimic drifts bestrew the ground;
Where nature's smiles my thoughts invite
To linger where her charms abound.

While yet the hush of morning holds
The little world that round me lies,
And fleecy clouds, in purple rolls,
Float slowly up the western skies,
Their silvery edges fringed with gold
Shot from the rising sun's first rays;
While amber drifts lay fold on fold,
Add zest to my enraptured gaze.

Oh, purple dawn! Oh, perfect day!
How have your charms my heart entwined!
How I shall long, when far away,
Another spot like this to find!
And now the thrush and catbird come
To fill the hedge with melody;
Long may the hedge-row be their home
And long may I their listener be!

The robin peering from her nest,
With eyes that show no sign of fear,
Well knows I love the robin best;
Of all sweet birds she is most dear.
But, robin, where are now the glees
We sang together long ago?
I listen for them 'midst the trees,
But do I hear them? Ah, no, no.

AMONG THE HILLS.

(INSCRIBED TO A FRIEND.)

Come with me through the early greening meadows,
And with me breathe the fragrant morning air;
Leave city haunts and city's noisome shadows,
And with its shadows leave your load of care;
For far afield my feet are daily roaming,
By flowery paths where wild-birds chant and trill;
From day-dawn until twilight's purple gloaming,
My errant fancy bids me wander still.

Prone on some mossy bank 'neath vine-roofed temple,
To dream sweet-visioned dreams the noontide
through;
Or stray where forest boughs spread wide their mantle,
And gaze where sunlit vistas pierce the view.
He knows but ill the fullness of enjoyment,
The heaping measures lavish Nature fills,
Who never breaks the tether of employment,
To seek for joys that lurk among the hills.

Oh, friend! despite your ample wealth and learning,
Your intercourse with wise and polished men,
Do you not feel within your breast a yearning
For restful days in woodland glade and glen;
Far from the din and hum of greedy commerce,
With sweet-voiced birds and laughing streams to
dwell;
To hold with Nature heart-inspiring converse,
With naught to bargain for and naught to sell?

A MORNING WITH THE BIRDS.

There are robins in the orchard,
There are bluebirds on the lawn,
And the blackbirds have been singing
In the grove since early dawn.
There's a congress of bright feathers,
And a carnival of song,
With a soul-inspiring chorus
That echoes far and long.

They have come, as if by magic,
From coverts far and near,
From hedgerow, vine and treetop
Their cunning heads appear,
All charged with pent-up music
That swells each tiny throat
With a hurry of expression
That piles it note on note.

'Tis a motley throng that greets me,
All the common birds are there;
Old friends of other springtimes,
Which makes them doubly dear.
The robin and the bluebird,
The catbird and the wren,
And the freckled-breasted brown thrush,
With a song as sweet as then.

The catbird leads the singing,
As he pipes with ecstasy,
His latest composition
Called "A Prisoned Bird Set Free;"
Then the woodthrush fills the thicket,
With an operatic gem
He has heard in sunny southland,
And is new to all of them.

But the morning has its climax
When the mocking bird lets go
His avalanche of music,
Like the mountain torrent's flow,
And the feathered Paderewski
Takes occasion to perform
His famous imitation
Of a battle in a storm.

How his little bosom quivers
As the music leaves his throat,
How entranced I stand and listen,
Drinking deep in every note,
And I feel a poet's longing
To possess the singer's art,
To touch the cold world's bosom,
As that wild bird touched my heart.

MY ROBIN.

I wonder if that robin
Is the one that when a boy
I listened to with rapture
As he piped his songs of joy
From the orchard boughs at morning,
When the dew was on the vine,
And his little mate was nesting
In the branches of the pine.

No, it can not be my robin,
Though the plumage of his breast
Is the counterpart in color
Of my robin's rufus vest;
For his song is not so blithesome
As my robin's used to be.
Alas! it is another bird,
And this another me.

EVENING.

(INSCRIBED TO REV. FRANK SEWALL.)

There is an hour at day's decline
When nature's forces all combine
To speak in parables divine
Of the Creator's power.
Yet not in parables alone,—
The sun's refulgence, backward thrown,
Is reason's searchlight from His Throne
Seen only at this hour.

For him of thoughtful mind, this light
Puts dreary thoughts of care to flight,
And in their place come visions bright
To glorify his power.
The sunset's splendors first awake
His soul to rapture, when they break
Upon his view like flamelit lake,
Or stars in crimson shower.

What ravishment of ear and eye,
What amplitude of scenery,
What coloring of cloud and sky
For man's felicity!
What wealth could purchase views so fair
What artist paint a scene so rare,
What time so meet for humble prayer
In earnest fervency!

The distant hills, in twilight mist,
Their tops in fading amethyst,
Sleep on in nature's lap caressed
All heedless of the hour.
The afterglow, that floods the vale
To dusk will deepen in the swale;
And as it climbs the hills, grow pale
And climbing, lose its power.

The sea-shell tints that gild the sky
And bronze white clouds that, floating by
Like sea gulls molting as they fly,
Are lightings from His face.
And, by this light, we're brought to see
Man's weakness and impotency,
And how dependent all must be
Upon the Master's grace.

TO MY WIFE.

O wife beloved, while yet I may
To thy true heart a tribute pay,
While yet your smiles my words approve,
Let me renew my vows of love.

Since that far day when first we met,
No word of thine has caused regret;
Naught but the deepest faith has been
With mutual trust our hearts between.

These words seem weak, I fain would bring
To this sweet task an offering
Wrought of the strongest words that prove
The depth of our abiding love.

But vows of love are only vows,
They smooth no furrows from our brows.
Each line that time has printed there
Spells love, and seals it with a prayer.

For we were lovers in our youth;
Life's noon found love a living truth;
Now Time records on each new page
We still are lovers in old age.

BROWN-THRUSH LANE.

Along a line of meadow,
Deep in rich, luxuriant grass,
Where checkered flecks of shadow
Flicker o'er you as you pass;
By the fence-row, briar-braided,
And laced with trailing vine,
Where sedge-grass, sickle-bladed,
With wild flowers intertwine,

Runs with willful course, a by-way,
Over hill and grassy plain,
From a farmstead to the highway,
Known to all as Brown-Thrush Lane.
There, when elder blossoms cluster
Their bunches soft and gray,
In fragrant creamy luster,
Along its narrow way,

You can hear the wild birds trilling
Gleeful notes in every tree,
Their tender music filling
The lane with melody.
'Tis then that Mr. Brown Thrush
Makes the concert all his own,
Leaves his tree-top, with a down-rush,
Taking all the parts alone.

Piping love notes to his nest-mate,
Banter songs to wren and jay,
Till you seem to see his breastplate
Turn from dapple-brown to gray.
How his speckled bosom quivers
As the music leaves his throat!
How his little body shivers,
Pulsing joy with every note!

Interlude, solo and sonnet
Follow on each other's heels,
Till you guess, when thinking of it,
All the ecstasy he feels.
Music's rapture wildly swaying
Every impulse of his strain—
So it goes without the saying,
Why they call it Brown-Thrush Lane.

WEE MARION.

A little maid with golden tress,
And blue eyes glinting mirthfulness,
Stands by my chair.
Her cheeks, where dimples come and go,
Like chickadees in drifts of snow,
Or shadows in the firelight's glow,
Red roses are.

Her soft arms steal about my neck,
My frowns will not her ardor check,
The loving sprite;
She talks insistently of dolls,
And other Christmas fol-do-rols,
While on my breast her small head lolls,
She hugs me tight.

That little head is filled with dreams;
For Christmas gifts she slyly schemes,
The firelight dim
Upon the wall my picture draws,
She sees it, and with mad applause,
Shouts, "Gran'pa's just like Santa Claus!
I guess he's Him."

BENEATH GREEN BOUGHS.

(INSCRIBED TO J. B.)

With me along the margin of the meadow,
That parts the land in fallow from the sown,
Where flecks of sun and dappled blots of shadow
Enmesh the path I often tread alone;
Where trailing vines hang woven in the hedges,
And greenbriers lace the sumac to the pine;
Where ground-birds build their nests amidst the sedges,
And eglantine with May flowers intertwine.

Oh come, dear friend, and with me taste the pleasure
That lavish Nature scatters far and wide;
As wild bees drink, all heedless of the measure,
So will we feast, and in the woods abide.
You need not speak; the pleasure will be ample,
To have so dear a comrade by my side;
We'll take the silent forest for example,
And sunshine, breeze, and shadow for our guide.

We know so well each other's thoughts and feelings,
'Twere ill to break the vision by our speech;
To fill our souls with Nature's rare revealings,
Were ecstasy and joy enough for each.
No fellowship more potent and unchanging,
No comrade-bonds more lasting, leal and strong,
Than those sweet ties knit by a May-day's ranging,
Midst fragrant flowers and set to wild-birds' song.

Where roses bloom the brightest by the river,
Where checker-berries cluster by the path,
We'll make believe that spring will last forever,
And comradeship will be its aftermath!
And when our feet grow weary with our roaming,
We'll seek some leafy covert for repose,
Where green boughs cast the spot in twilight gloaming,
We'll see the long bright spring day to its close.

AT SUNRISE.

A cloudless sky-line stretching far
To right and left, where hill-tops bar
The eye's untrammelled view;
Hunting the faint horizon's edge,
It tapers to an ether wedge
That cleaves the distance through.

And stretched above this belt of blue,
In colors of the brightest hue,
Sky-hung, a picture swings;
Painted on rifts of splintered cloud,
White as the robes the saints enshroud,
And light as angel wings.

Curdles of crimson, pile on pile,
It catches the blushing Dawn's first smile,
Purple, amber, and gray;
With rosetints from the rainbow's dye,
And the blue of an Irish colleen's eye,
And gems of purest ray.

Shimmering lights and shadows play
Across its surface, like the spray
The foaming torrent throws;
Faint pencilings of sapphire trace
Its borders, wrought of filmy lace,
In colors of the rose.

Brief as the raptures of a dream
Its splendors fade, while yet they seem
To be but scarce begun;
Faint now its crimson dyes and pale;
Its banners fall and meekly trail
Before the rising sun.

SONG BIRDS.

Sing, little bird, your sweetest song,
And let each note, throat-warm and clear,
Float on the breezes far and long,
To charm the listening ear.
The trill that swells your vibrant throat
And fills your little heart with glee,
Finds in my breast an answering note
Akin to ecstasy.

And blended with your tender lay
Comes the soft murmur of the stream,
Like wind-harps in the boughs that play
Sleep-music to a dream.
Lute-like it lingers on the breeze,
Then slowly fades, and, fading, dies,
Like spirit voices in the trees,
Half laughter and half sighs.

Among the locust's blossoms faint,
And drunk of perfume, nods the jay.
The mourning-dove, with sad complaint,
Flits through the alders gray.
The sparrow chirps within the grass,
Joe-pie-weed hides the whistling quail.
The blackbirds at their daily mass
Chant anthems in the swale.

The brown thrush in his trailing flight
From shrub to hedge, from hedge to vine,
The freckles on his breast as bright
As bubbles on new wine,
Will drop a soulful lyric here,
A half-sung sonnet there,
In notes as running water clear,
Beseeching as a prayer.

Here and everywhere, and always,
The languorous summer through,
In briery, vine-wreathed hallways,
The catbird's song is due.
He sings the summer sunshine in,
The autumn sunlight down,
While I, in homely stanzas, pin
These plaudits in his crown.

WHEN MAMIE WENT AWAY.

When Mamie went away, the summer sunshine faded
From out the sky and left it cold and gray;
And little birds, in song, the fates upbraided
For taking her away.
Ah, little birds, 'twas sorrow's saddest day
For you and me, when Mamie went away.

When she had gone away, the plover's call grew fainter,
And up the wooded slopes the pensive Autumn came;
And prodigal of colors, subtle painter,
Gave all the maple trees a crown of flame.
What was it, little thrush, that turned the meadows
gray
And caused your song to cease, when Mamie went away?

Since Mamie went away, the seasons come abiding
Their little day, then pass like birds of spring.
Life's bitter waters, seaward gliding,
Leave in my heart bleak sorrow's sting.
Go, little thrush and sparrow, go chant your saddest
lay,
There's naught for us but sorrow, since Mamie went
away.

THE CROW AND THE JAY.

Gone are my little friends, the birds,
That lately sang on every spray;
Their notes to me were plain as words;
Alas! they all have flown away.

Only the crow and jay remain,
My dreary leisure to beguile;
I meet them in the woody lane,
Their discord but provokes a smile.

But who am I to criticise
Or scorn their honest minstrelsy?
They are not singing for a prize,
Nor are they paid to sing for me.

Besides, they doubtless sing their best,
And that's the best the best can do;
Let thrush and mockbird do the rest,
I'll gladly listen to them too.

They're quite indifferent to my views,
Whether I blame them or applaud,
Whether I cheer them or abuse,
Since better singers are abroad.

Thus has it been through life for me;
A blend of bitter and of sweet;
The discords of the crow and jay,
But make life's myst'ry more complete.

But soon my singers will return
To swing and sing on every spray;
And I shall from their presence learn
More tolerance for the crow and jay.

“THERE’S A BROWN THRUSH IN THE
TREE-TOP.”

There’s a brown thrush in the treetop,
Singing, Oh, so cheerily.
He’s been singing all the morning
Just as if it were for me;
If for me I am his debtor,
Being here with him alone,
For no bird could do it better,
And the credit’s all his own.

Like the ancient Roman debtors,
I’m his bondman for the while;
But I quite enjoy my fetters,
And his gyves provoke a smile.
He’s an old friend, every summer
I have found him in these trees.
Though he’s not an early comer,
When he’s come, he’s here to please.

And my heart responds with pleasure
To his soft and tender lay.
Every note and every measure
Drive intrusive thoughts away.
And I’ve come to know his meaning,
Plain as script by prophets writ,
Swinging there, his feathers preening,
For my heart interprets it.

Then, Oh, brown thrush, sing for others
As this day you’ve sung for me!
For to us all men are brothers
In our song fraternity!
Sing; ’twill make our burdens lighter,
Singing scorn and doubt away;
Making summer sunshine brighter
By the magic of your lay.

SEPTEMBER.

So faint are the tokens that tell it is fall,
So lately has summer been here,
That we feel in our hearts that it is still within call
To return if we shed but one tear.

For the wild carrot whitens the meadow and lea,
The goldenrod yellows the plain;
There're blotches of crimson in many a tree,
And a muskadine scent in the lane.

The hedge-rows are dappled with tints manifold,
The chinquapin browns on the bough,
The grass in the pasture is withered and old,
And the ragweed bows down to the plow.

There's a tremulous hush in the pine-mantled grove,
There's a murmur that follows the stream,
There's a musical tinkle of bells in the cove
Like a melody heard in a dream.

The hermit thrush sings to his mate in the glen,
And the wood-pecker taps the dead gum,
The blue jay and robin are chaffing the wren,
And the pheasant is beating his drum.

The squirrel, quiescent, reposes at noon
On the shadiest side of the tree;
He moves with the shadows that deepen anon
And is lost in the wood's mystery.

The whip-poor-will soon will be piping his threat,
The mock bird will sing to the moon,
The night hawk will prate of a kingdom to let;
And the day will go down all too soon.

THE LITTLE THINGS IN NATURE.

There's the modest little bluet
In the corners of the fence,
The wild-rose in the hedge-rows,
Nature's sweetest recompense;
And a thousand other blossoms,
Unnameable but fair,
With a world of fragrant herbage,
All unnoticed everywhere.

Oh, the little things that nature
In its wisdom has brought forth,
Every covert hides its thousands,
Every green bank gives them birth;
And in all the cradle hollows,
Lightly covered by swart leaves,
Spring a host of varied colors,
Where the spider spins and weaves.

In among the fragrant blossoms
Of the chinquapin is heard
The wild bee's drowsy murmur,
And the purr of humming-birds;
Little minstrels whose soft music,
Floating on the summer air,
Is as soothing to the listener
As the sound of whispered prayer.

Only those whose hearts are tutored
By a love for living things
Can know the restful pleasure
That a woodland ramble brings;
They alone can read the message
Writ on every silent tree,
Or fittingly interpret
The wood's deep mystery.

AMMENDALE.

Once more the Vansville vales are green;
Once more the vernal breezes blow;
And in the thicket's briary screen,
Wee, feathered minstrels come and go.
The yellow throat, with plaintive note;
The blithe, shrill whistle of the quail,
The cardinal, with crimson coat,
Make glad the heart at Ammendale.

The murmur of the purling stream,
As fretfully it glides along;
The white sands of its margin gleam
Like crystals in the sunlight strong.
From spring-fed source it takes its course
Through meadows green to rustic mill,
And to its moss-grown wheel gives force
Beneath the lee of Vansville Hill.

The plowman whistles to his team;
Young lambs run bleating to the ewe;
The herd of Jerseys by the stream
A thrifty tone lends to the view.
The flying train that leaves a stain
Of steam and smoke to mark its trail;
Its scream resounding o'er the plain;
Will drop the mail at Ammendale.

The robin pipes his roundelay
Within the marsh the blackbirds sing,
And in the hedge the purple gray
Of steel gleams on the catbird's wing.
Bird music rare, green fields, pure air,
With health that floats on every gale;
Contentment and good will to spare,
These bright spring days at Ammendale.

FALL.

Flecks of yellow, blots of red,
In the green boughs overhead;
Withered herbage in the grass
Of the pasture where I pass;
These and many other signs,
Midst the cedars and the pines,
Seen as plain as light at dawn,
Tell the tale that summer's gone.

Summer gone, but linger still
Beauties rare on plain and hill;
Tints that rival rainbow dyes
Set in summer evening skies,
Gemming meadow, fen and lea,
Bright as shells from out the sea,
Summer's gone, but left are all
The countless splendors of the fall.

All the fairest flowers remain;
Golden rod in endless chain;
Daisies interspersed like gems,
Bend and bow on graceful stems;
Asters sporting everywhere,
Blue-eyed beauties bright and fair;
Late rose blooming on the lawn,
Heedless that the summer's gone.

Bob-white in the pasture land,
To his sweetheart near at hand,
Pipes his love notes, soft and clear,
As those trilled when June was here,
Flicker teeters through the air,
Quite as if he did not care
Whether seasons go or stay;
He'll be happy either way.

And the flicker's view is mine;
Winter's frost or summer's shine,
Each has pleasures, heaven sent,
For the heart where dwells content.

THE THRUSH'S SONG.

Now, brown thrush, let your tuneful throat
Pour out its sweetest, blithest strain;
The loudest, clearest, gladdest note
That ever wakened hedge and lane;
Sing back the verdure to the trees;
Sing sunshine in where now is shade;
Sing till the wild rose scents the breeze,
And hawthorne blossoms light the glade.

Sing frost and chilling winds afar;
Sing in the soft and dewy dawn;
Sing till the glowing vernal star
Awakes the lilacs in the lawn;
Sing furrow lyrics to the plow
To cheer the plowman at his toil;
Sing cooling breezes to his brow,
And rain and sunshine to the soil.

Sing for the maiden in her bower;
The mother at the cradle side;
Sing toil a longer nooning hour;
Sing for the bridegroom and the bride;
Sing malice from the hearts of men,
And vanity from womankind;
Sing justice to the critic's pen,
And reason to the common mind.

I KNOW A LITTLE STREAM.

(RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND, M. S. FARMER.)

I know a little stream, far back
From human habitation;
A stream that makes a shining track,
And throws its murmured music back
In ripples of elation.

A blithesome little stream that winds
Among the reeds and rushes;
Through alders gray and wild grapevines,
Where willow sprays and eglantines
A harbor make for thrushes.

Between its fern-fringed banks it fares,
Its liquid notes back throwing;
Soft as a maiden's vesper prayers,
And tender as the wind harp's airs
In whispered numbers flowing.

Bright little stream! How oft I've trod
The paths beside its shores;
O'er moss and sedge, o'er sand and sod,
With liquid music every rod,
As down its course it pours.

Flow on bright stream, and flowing sing,
Though I'm no longer near you;
Fond memory to my heart will bring
Each whispered note, each cherished thing,
And so I still shall hear you.

SONGS OF
MY OWL.

You may scowl, Mr. Owl,
Rough your feathers, sir, and growl,
For the bluebird has escaped you,
Whom you thought to treat so foul.
He has gone and the dawn
Is breaking on the lawn,
And he is in the orchard singing
Instead of being drawn.
You may wink, sir, and blink,
And try your best to think
How you missed the little fellow,
For you darted like a mink.
But you did, and he hid
In the alders, to get rid
Of your most unhallowed presence,
Then good morning to you bid.
And despite his sad fright,
His blue wings cut the light
And he reached his orchard covert
With a twitter of delight.
'Twas the size of your eyes,
I most shrewdly do surmise,
That caused you all the trouble
And made you lose the prize.
Did the bright morning light
Get between you and last night?
Or was the fault postponement,
Rather than defective sight?
In a word, you're a bird,
Like some men of whom I've heard,
Who are always never ready—
Though the phrase may seem absurd.

'They will wait till too late,
'Then their luck they will berate,
And blame the past procession
Because they hesitate.
'Then, in brief, you're a thief,
Whom delay has brought to grief;
For you waited to get ready
Until daylight brought relief.
But a song, clear and strong,
In the orchard you prolong;
While your blinking hesitation
Leaves you in the hungry throng.

SONG SPARROW.

O little song sparrow, that tender refrain
You sang me this morning out there in the rain
Was an odd little song and never a part
Of your every-day lay, for it came from the heart,
As liquid and soft as the drip of the dew
From the heart of the rose when the long night is
through;
And it woke in my bosom that feeling of joy
The brown sparrow's song gave my heart when a boy,
And a troop of sweet memories flitting along
Kept time to the lilt of your blithe morning song.
O song sparrow, song sparrow, sing me again
That tender refrain as 'twas sung to me then,
For the joy time of childhood departed so long
Comes back to me now on the notes of your song.

THE ROBIN.

My little yellow-breasted friend
Is here again; the orchard's end
Is palpitant with his sweet song;
I wonder that he stayed so long,
When his old friend would fain have heard
The song of almost any bird,
To while away the winter days,
That seem so long without his lays.

Oh! robin, in your blithesome song,
That I have waited for so long,
I catch one note, one tender strain,
That brings my childhood back again;
That distant time, that blissful time,
When Youth's bright hopes were set to rhyme,
And sang their numbers clear and strong,
And gleesome as your own sweet song.

You come a herald of the spring;
Its perfumes still about you cling;
And all forgot the winter's ills,
While your blithe lay the orchard fills.
Then sing, sweet bird, those notes again,
That childhood song that charmed me then;
And those bright hopes for which I mourn,
Will they come back with spring's return?

Ah! me, how brief is life at best;
And as mine eyes I backward cast
Along the path my feet have trod,
And note the distance, rod by rod,
The landmarks stationed here and there,
That number days of joy or care,
I marvel not the time seems long,
Since first I heard the robin's song.

BY THE STREAM.

The queenly elder blossoms sway
Above the gray sands of the shore;
And foamy ripples, laughing, play
Upon the channel's rocky floor;
The drowsy eddies, curling turn
Between the banks and bars of sand,—
Receding, lap the fringe of fern
That drapes the margin where I stand.

The tree-tops, swaying in the breeze,
Are filled with wild-bird minstrelsy;
The trailing vines about my knees,
Are rich with rare perfumery;
Since sun-rise I have loitered here,
Steeped in the beauties of the scene;
The stream's low music in my ear,
Sings to my heart a glad refrain.

On this same spot, long years ago,
Years that have glided like this stream;
Ere Time had taught my heart to know
That happiness is but a dream;
The sun was sinking in the west,
Midst fleecy clouds of brightest dyes;
The sky-line o'er the hill's low crest
Seemed a blue ribbon to my eyes;

Across the stream, among the boughs,
The thrush was singing merrily;
The blackbirds, in a glad carouse,
Were winging it from tree to tree;
When of a sudden, silence fell;
The thrush grew mute among the boughs;
For Doris, tripping through the dell,
Came driving home the lowing cows.

The miller's daughter, Doris Clare—
And fair was she as June's first rose—
The morning breeze that kissed her hair
Was fragrant still at evening's close;
Her hat was swinging by its strings
From one plump arm as white as snow;
Her auburn hair, in silken rings,
Shone floss-like in the sunset's glow.

She smiled and threw a kiss my way,
When rapture filed my ardent breast;
She passed, and all the sky turned gray,
And darkness gathered in the west.
Oh, stream, much as I love your song,
Much as your charms beguile my heart,
Regrets will still my bosom throng;
'Twas you that kept our souls apart.

MOTHER LOVE.

There is no earthly passion
So remote from selfishness,
So sincere and abiding,
So fraught with tenderness,
So near to that Divinity
Vouchsafed us from above,
So distinctively instinctive,
As a Christian Mother's love.

Then cherish her while living,
Let her sainted memory prove
A bond that Fate in giving
Sanctifies immortal love.

TO THE FIELD ASTER.

Brave little flower, your sturdy spear
Holds to the breeze your purple bloom;
Each starlike flower, a shining tear,
To lavish at dead Summer's tomb.

When all your sisters of the plain
Lie withered in the leafy mould,
You hold your court along the lane,
Dispensing favors manifold.

Beneath the gray October skies,
Unmindful of the autumn chill,
A warmer luster in your eyes,
And brighter tints your petals fill.

Of all the flowers that light the fields,
You, latest, greet me with good cheer,
A pleasure source that yearly yields
A joy that strengthens year by year.

You give me courage, little flower;
Your smiles, my flagging hopes renew;
My heart would falter, faint and cower,
Brave little flower, wer't not for you.

Your cheery faces by my path,
Seem like the meeting with dear friends;
Bright spots amid the aftermath,
Sweet landmarks set where autumn ends.

AN AUTUMN EVENING.

Fresh breezes from the glowing west
Blow soft o'er hill and dale;
And blithely from the knoll's brown crest,
The flicker of the dappled breast
Makes answer to the quail.

The dank marsh, deep in tangled maze,
Grows chilly in the shade;
And in the glen a golden haze,
Illumined by the sun's last rays,
Will soon to twilight fade.

Along the autumn-tinted lane
The kine wend slowly home;
The whistle of the farmer lad
Gives token of the fun he's had,
Since nutting time has come.

The shellbark gay, in satin leaf,
Shows fruit on every spray;
That frisky, cunning little thief,
The squirrel, to his heart's relief,
Takes all he wants away.

But twilight deepens into night;
Belated birds fly home;
As day fades slowly from my sight,
The round moon rises, calm and bright,
To drive away the gloom.

Thus in the autumn of life's day,
Though somber shadows fall,
The lamp of hope illumines my way,
And lights me through the evening gray
To realms of after all.

SIGNS OF WINTER.

The dapple-breasted flicker,
As he teeters through the air,
To the leaf-denuded maple,
With its branches brown and bare.
Seems to have a dim foreknowledge
Of cold weather drawing near,
And he husbands every feather
To face the winter drear.

The squirrel, lazy, lying
Along the topmost limb,
With his towsly tail-flag flying
In the breeze that coddles him,
Seems to speculate with pleasure
On the store of nuts laid by,
And enjoys his breezy leisure,
With a sparkle in his eye.

That minstrel, the song sparrow,
In the marsh goes hopping through
The iron-weed and yarrow,
And the aster white and blue,
With a quiver in his twitter,
Which bespeaks a growing fear
That winter, bleak and bitter,
Will all too soon be here.

The rabbit, nimbly frisking
Across the dusty road,
Or through the hedge-row whisking
To his snug, leaf-lined abode,
Is nature's only minion
That frosty days delight,
And is firm in the opinion
That the weather's coming right.

The signs of wood and meadow
Point to a speedy day
When winter's somber shadow
Will dim the sun's bright ray;
But the song the brook goes humming
Is the song the seasons sing,
And the dreary winter coming
Is the harbinger of spring.

PICKING BERRIES.

One day while picking berries, picking berries in the glen,
And standing where the sunbeams fell,
I heard somebody whistle and I heard a footstep near,
And somehow I knew them very well.

The heart in my bosom, I know it was there,
Set to throbbing as tho' 'twould be free,
And the mocking bird was singing where the sunbeams
fell
In the branches of the old forest tree.

Was it the footstep or the whistle, or the mockingbird
that sang
In the branches where the sunbeams fell,
That caused this mighty thumping and throbbing in my
breast?
'Twas more than my simple heart could tell.

But there's one thing I know, and I never shall forget,
How we sat where the sunbeams fell;
How berries lost their sweetness and how twilight ap-
peared
Ere Willie rose to say farewell.

INDIAN SUMMER.

At morn, along the woodland stream,
A film of ice, brief as a dream,
 Gleams in the sun.
And frost gems in the weeds and grass,
Like trinkets wrought of polished glass,
Or myriad points of burnished brass,
 That shine as one.

A dreamy haze, half fog, half smoke,
Above the red leaves of the oak
 Hangs like a pall;
Incasing all the hilltops gray,
And valley stretching far away,
Where regal Indian summer's sway
 Transfigures all.

That murmur in the piney wood
Is not, when rightly understood,
 A song of woe.
'Tis more of joy than sad regret
To see fair summer's coronet,
Which lingers on the laurel yet,
 Replaced by snow.

For nature hath her moods, and this
Fair Indian summer matron is
 With envy filled.
To'ard her arch-rivals, wind and sun,
One hoarse with cold, one bright with fun,
Who each insist the other one
 The blossoms killed.

O, briefest, fairest season, stay,
 Be with us, and inspire my lay
 With courage stern.
 For dreary winter lies between
 Your mellow skies and springtime's green;
 And hours of care must intervene
 Ere you return.

LOVE.

'Tis said that Love's a malady;
 That when its pangs first smite our hearts,
 Then Reason takes a holiday,
 And straightway from its throne departs,
 And, cynics say, remains away
 As long as Love elects to stay.

If it be true that Love is blind
 And reasonless, the heart must find
 A refuge for so fair a flower;
 And what so meet as Beauty's Bower?
 Where Reason enters not to vent
 Its sneers at Love's environment.

Howe'er it be, though Reason flee,
 And leave me but Love's ecstasy,
 I still shall worship at its shrine,
 O sacred flame, O bliss benign!
 The wild bird's note in forest free
 Is set to Love's own minstrelsy.

And, as for Reason, let it go;
 There's but one perfect joy below,
 Or yet above—
 One all-absorbing, quenchless flame,
 Which I, unworthy, humbly name—
 Divinest Love.

THE SQUIRREL.

Watch the cunning little rascal,
As he springs from bough to bough
Of the shellbark on the hillside,
With its leaves all scattered now—
Save the few whose satin yellow
Flaunts the brisk November gale
And conceal the frisky fellow
With the wealth of tousy tail.

Note his bright eye's saucy glitter
As he scales the highest limb;
Catch the rascal's scolding twitter,
And it's all you'll catch of him;
For he's near his cozy chamber
In the hollow chestnut bough,
And he's out of sight and danger
In his nut-stored quarters now.

Yet turn your back a minute
And you'll see him, like as not,
Tail a-blow, himself hid in it,
In quite another spot,
Snugly perched asleep or dozing
On a mossy lower limb,
Or is the rascal posing
For a photograph of him.

Then a streak of gray ascending
Like an arrow from a bow,
To the topmost branches bending
Like a spirit see him go.
Through space he springs as sprightly
As a feather on the breeze,
And strikes the ground as lightly;
Then is gone among the trees.

THE BEAUTIES OF THE WOODS.

To some the beauty of the woods
Has never been revealed,
The alchemy of leaf and bud
To them is ever sealed.
The whisper music of the pine
To them no pleasure brings,
The songless bird among the vines
Is blithe as he who sings.

They feel no rapture when the gale
Sweeps through deep forest aisle,
And woodland scenes of grandeur fail
To chasten or beguile.
No scene or sound of beauty wakes
Within their breasts nor joy nor awe,
To their dull ears the songthrush makes
The same discordance as the crow.

But I whose early years were spent
Midst forest grandeur, ne'er have known
Bright hours more fraught with sweet content
Than those passed in the woods alone.
The swaying bough, the wind's harp sigh
E'er waked an answering chord in me;
The robin's song, the curlew's cry,
To me were sweetest melody.

I envy not the breast, so cold
And passionless, as not to feel
The fibers of the heart unfold
When Nature's charms to it appeal.
And warped of vision are the eyes,
That see not, by an inner light,
The fairest picture 'neath the skies
Wrought by the Painter Infinite.

WHEN AUTUMN STAINS THE TREES.

The hickory saplings on the hill
Are dyed with colors manifold;
Pale amber tints their top leaves fill,
And downward deepen to bright gold.

All crimson are the maple leaves,
And blood red stains the sumac's bough;
The sweet gum with the grapevine weaves
A yellow chaplet for its brow.

The broad leaves of the sycamore
Like little banners flaunt the breeze;
The willows bend, beside the shore,
Their tress-like branches to their knees.

The sassafras all naked stands,
Divested of its leafy dress;
Its bare limbs stretched like pleading hands,
Deploring its stark nakedness.

The swart persimmons in the hedge
Hang purpling by slow degrees;
Late daisies by the pasture's edge
Bend gracefully before the breeze.

The chestnut's thorny burs gape wide,
Their ripened fruitage to display;
The squirrel, watching, miser-eyed,
Two squirrels' shares will bear away.

A dreamy hush pervades the glen;
The fields 'neath withered herbage lie;
A mist broods over marsh and fen,
And autumn breezes sob and sigh.

WINTER GLOOM.

Alas, full half the beauties
Of the forest have departed,
And I gaze with vague forebodings,
On their sad evanishment;
And I seek for woodland pleasures
With an interest but half-hearted,
With a yearning in my bosom
That's akin to discontent.

The birds have left the tree-tops;
Green leaves no longer flutter
In the balmy autumn breezes
That were wont to stir their sprays;
And the stream frets o'er the pebbles,
With a discontented mutter,
As if it fears the fetters
Of the frosty winter days.

Dark leaden clouds are lowering;
The crows keep up their clamor,
A chorus of derision
For the antics of the jay;
And in the cedar branches
A mateless yellow-hammer
Is pluming his gray pinions
For a journey far away.

Bleak winter's breath is creeping
Like a palsy o'er its victim,
And the pools are slowly glazing
Like the eyes of dying men;
The pine trees sigh and shiver
As if their conscience pricked them,
While through their feathery leafage
Comes the autumn's requiem.

A WINTER NIGHT.

Daylight has faded from the west,
Where misty clouds of amethyst
And gold hang low
Above the red horizon's rim;
While here and there a star shines dim,
And yellow sun-dogs, cold and grim,
Fortoken snow.

The gloom grows thick o'er street and park;
The cold intensifies the dark,
Or so it seems.
Men hurry by on numbing feet,
Like vanquished soldiers in retreat,
Toward that warm camp, to all men sweet,
Where home fire gleams.

Night long the biting air will sting
The fairest cheek, and quick tears bring
To brightest eye;
Night long the bitter wind will paint
With icy fingers, pictures quaint
On leaf and pane, nor pause nor faint
When dawn is nigh.

Oh, winter sun, diffuse your heat
Through every wretched home and street
To warm the poor.
For many a cheerless, fireless hearth
Is cold tonight on this broad earth,
And want and woe have banished mirth
From out its door.

Oh, Thou, who rul'st with loving hand,
Who seasons have at Thy command,
Thee I implore;
Temper the winds and blunt the sting
Of frost, that life-destroying thing,
And haste the glad return of spring
To cheer the poor.

NORA McCREE.

A letter from Nora, fair Nora McCree;
A message so sweet that the bird in the tree
Will sing his love notes with a tenderer trill
To his mate in her nest, and the blithe whip-poor-will
Will welcome the gloaming with whistle more clear
And the brook murmur softer its way to the mere.

Fond token of truth, sweet message of love!
Perfumed by her touch, to the breast of a dove
It clung in its passage and felt the soft beat
Of the messenger's heart, as winged and fleet,
His flight from her casement, o'er mountain and sea,
On pinons of love, bore her letter to me.

Brave bird, your devotion my heart will reward
Your mistress is mine, our affections accord;
We serve the same princess, bond-servants are we
To the same charming girl, sweet Nora McCree.
Then hasten, sweet bird, our allegiance to prove
And bear her this message of tenderest love.

MORNING AFTER SNOW.

The radiance of a winter's sun
Shines pale upon new-fallen snow,
Where frost gems, by the north wind spun,
In bright transparence glow.

And pendent from the farmstead eaves,
Like shining daggers pointed down,
Icicles hang, midst ivy leaves
That dormer windows crown.

As yet untouched by living feet,
The snowy carpet's tapestry
Spreads like the dead earth's winding sheet
O'er plain and forest tree.

Now rising from the western hills,
The wintry wind, with chilling breath,
Ice-dims the softly flowing rills
Like eyes that close in death.

The silence broken by the din
Of clamorous crows in hungry cry;
And blue jays call in notes between
A whimper and a sigh.

And soon the woodman's ax will ring,
And in the road the teamster's song,
As blithesome as the lark's in spring,
Will speed the hours along.

RETURN OF THE BIRDS.

You are back again, sweet singers,
From your far-off winter home,
Like a troop of sunshine bringers,
For our pleasure you have come
Now the trees will sway with music,
And the hedge-rows bud with song,
And the stream drink in the harmony
And ripple it along.

In every wayside arbor
Chant the black birds in their glee,
Each throat a throbbing harbor
For bird note melody.
And the butcher bird, while waiting
For his prey to come along,
Will quench anticipation
In a flood of rapt'rous song.

The little brown song sparrow
Greets the pee-wee when he calls,
And hops across the furrow
To be where the sunshine falls.
The robin pipes a challenge
To the cat-bird on his spray,
And arranges for a meeting
Some time later in the day.

Aye! the singing tribes will gather
In the groves of Ammendale,
There'll be birds of every feather
From the sparrow to the quail.
And the jay will view their coming
With a self-sufficient smile,
For, like sky and cloud and sunshine,
He's been with us all the while.

A WINTER'S NIGHT AT HOME

When the wind sings through the orchard
From the dreary western hills,
With fierce snowstorms in its numbers,
And a breath that nips and chills;
When the sun goes down at evening
With grim sun dogs in his train,
And bright ice gems gleam like diamonds
In the herbage of the plain.

When the stock are in their stanchions
With their mangers crammed with hay,
And the sheep have had their rations
And are snugly housed away,
There's a sense of homely comfort
In a cheerful blazing fire,
And I say: "Such nights as these are
Home's, the place I most admire."

And I pull my old splint rocker
Close beside the glowing grate,
With my pipe where I can reach it
By the well-filled apple plate,
With a mug of beady cider
Mulling on the blazing hearth,
Then I vote myself the title
Of the richest man on earth.

Here with all the creature comforts
Close about me, and within
My breast serene contentment,
With my life as it has been.
With strong faith in the hereafter
And Hope's pole star beaming bright,
And good will for all my neighbors,
Fills with joy the winter night.

So the winds may sing or bluster,
Bringing hail or bringing snow,
Still my fire will hold its luster
And the cider still will flow.
And my pipe will lend its fragrance
To dispel the outer gloom,
While my heart records the pleasure
Of a winter's night at home.

LET THE CHILDREN HAVE THEIR FUN.

Let the children have their fun!
Every bit of fun they can;
Tom and Harry, Ned and John,
Every sturdy little man.
Let them laugh and shout and play,
Full of noise as any gun;
Every hour of childhood's day
Let the children have their fun.

Give them time and room for play,
In the house and on the lawn;
Think how soon will skies turn gray,
And sunny hours be gone.
Put dreary tasks away,
And let every mother's son
And daughter happy be—
Let the children have their fun.

Childhood days are few and brief,
Life is dark enough at best,
From bud to falling leaf
There is more of work than rest.
So let them have their play
From dawn to set of sun,
Give the youngsters right of way,
And let them have their fun.

UNCLE JIM.

Uncle Jim's a queer ol' chap;
An' he's a brother to our pap.
He's 'bout a hundred years, he says,
Older than our father is.
But still he's jest as full of fun,
An' odd-come-shorts as any one.
An' if it wa'n't for rheumatiz,
An' that ol' crippled arm of his,
He'd be as peart and full of biz
As anybody, so he says.
Sometimes, when he goes away
To town, an' it is pension day,
Me and Jack stay up for him,
An' keep a fire for Uncle Jim.
For we know, sure, he's goin' to bring
His gripsack full of everything,
An' pockets full up to the brim—
An' pa says, so is Uncle Jim.
But we don't care, he's allus kind
To me and Jack, an' we don't find
No better friend to us than him.
That's why we love our Uncle Jim.
But sometimes he gets after us,
An' let's on like he'd make a fuss,
Tries to make us think he's crusty,
Calls me "squat" an' Jack "ol' rusty,"
'Cause I'm short an' Jack is slim.
But we're too many for Uncle Jim.
Up in the attic he has got
A musket gun an' a whole lot
Of 'cutrements, a ca'tridge box,
An' ol' canteen that's seen hard knocks,
An' on a peg an ol' blue coat;
He says it's ol' enough to vote.

An' in one sleeve an awful rent
'That shows jest where the bullet went
'That broke his arm an' crippled him;
We're awful sorry for Uncle Jim.
Some day, he says, when he gets time.
He's goin' to die, then we can clim'
Up to the attic and jest have fun
All day long with that ol' gun,
An' 'cutrements, an' ca'tridge box,
An' ol' canteen that's seen hard knocks.
We'll keep 'em always neat and trim,
'Cause they belonged to Uncle Jim.

A SONG.

No matter how bitter the bleak winds may blow,
There's always a zephyr to follow;
No matter how rugged the hill-path may grow,
Below is a storm-sheltered hollow.

No matter how somber the skies look at dawn,
At noon they may shimmer with splendor;
No matter how changeful the friend, when he's gone
His absence makes memories tender.

No matter what trials we meet on our way,
Stout hearted, no trouble we'll borrow;
The pleasures of life we'll make friends with today,
And put off its woes till tomorrow.

The skies may be dreary, the path may be long,
Yet life is too brief for repining;
'Tis better to march to defeat with a song,
Than to go to a victory whining.

LITTLE JOE.

Little Joe climbed upon my knee,
The other night when the sun went down;
Little Joe's my grandson, spry as a flea,
And the peartest boy in town;
He fumbled around my face for a while,
With his chubby hands in my whiskers gray,
And fingered my watch-chain thoughtfully.
Little tads always do that way.

Then he cuddled his curly head in my breast,
And I thought for a while he'd gone to sleep;
But little Joe ain't that kind of a child,
And I missed it by a heap;
For he soon peeped out one little bright eye,
That shone in the dusk like the evening star,
With, "Tell me a story, gran'pa, please,
'Bout what you seen when you lived in the war."

Now I'd told the child every story I knew,
A hundred times over, more or less,
But a story is better the more its told,
To such little chaps, I guess;
So I cleared my throat and started in,
At an easy pace, as a person will
When he's only trying to just kill time,
And he's got the time to kill.

I told him a little of this thing and that;
How cannons roared and bullets flew;
How I got a minnie ball plum through my hat,
In the fall of sixty-two;
'Bout how we marched and counter-marched,
Eat hard-tack, and slep' on the ground,
Chased the "Johnnies" and got chased back,—
Kep' moving the whole year round;

But when I come to that little chap
Who beat the drum for the Sixty-fourth,
Then little Joe's eyes began to snap,
And he listened for all he was worth;
For he was his hero, and when I told
How he stood at the front in the thick of the fight,
And call after call from his drumsticks rolled,
He shouted with delight.

And I left him beating away at his drum,
Safe from the murderous fire of the foe;
To his sad fate my lips were dumb,
For the love of little Joe.
I might have told how the Chaplain found
His mangled corpse at set of sun,
His young breast pierced with many a wound—
For him the day was won.

And little Joe's curly head lay still,
Upon my breast in slumber deep;
And may it be the Master's will,
From war's wild strife my boy to keep.

OPPORTUNITY.

'Tis said that opportunity
Will come to every man some day,
And if he be awake and meet it,
And with true courage grasp and greet it,
Even royalty will with him treat,
And all the world be at his feet;
But if he sleepeth late the day
When cometh opportunity,
He still may slumber on and on;
The world will never know he's gone.

LITTLE BOB.

That little curly-headed chap,
With rooster feathers in his cap,
An' rosy cheeks with dimples in—
Yes, an' another in his chin,
Is the pertest youngster on the job,
An' he's my grandson, Little Bob.

His name, he says, is oney ist Bob,
Not Robert, Robbie, nor yet Rob;
You call him either, and he'll raise hob,
And tell you his name is oney ist Bob.
That's name enough for the fat young squab.

For there's more than a name in Little Bob.
There may be finer kids than he
Among the rich, but he'll do me;
An' one warm kiss on his fresh young cheek
Keeps my old heart tender for a week;
An' it warmer grows with every throb,
When I think of my darling, Little Bob.

Old Deacon Spooner passed one day,
An' some one heard the Deacon say,
That the sight of that little bright-eyed boy
Would fill a sorry heart with joy;
An' he flicked a fly from his old gray cob,
An' he winked his eye at Little Bob.

Now Deacon Spooner, years ago,
Cheated me like Jericho,
About a horse trade; but since he
Praised Little Bob, it's up to me
To rub that out; an' I'm right here
To read the Deacon's title clear.

If the horse I got wa'n't jest first-class,
The nag he got wa'n't hard to pass;
An' a swap is a swap, so the Deacon said,
An' the man on top comes out ahead;
So we'll call it square, 'twas a bootless job;
And we both have a share in Little Bob.

WEE WAYFARER.

(RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO A. B.)

Dear little feet as white as snow
And soft as downy puffs of fur,
With dimples on each tiny toe,
I kiss them, with my eyes a-blur.

I hold them in my withered hand,
So small they hardly fill my palm;
And, dreaming, try to understand
What fate awaits my wee pet lamb.

Will skies be bright above her head,
And sweet flowers bloom beside her way;
Or will the path her feet must tread
Be cast in shadows cold and gray?

If I could always have her here,
Close to my heart as she is now,
I would not have one moment's fear
That care could ever cloud her brow.

So for her little feet, O Lord,
Make Thou a pathway smooth and bright,
And, faring, keep Thou watch and ward
Till she shall reach the realms of light.

A ROSEBUD.

There's a rosebud of a baby blooming just across the
way,
As sweet as ever grew on bush or bough,
And I watch his petals growing and spreading day by
day,
Like a blush upon a maiden's cheek and brow.

Was there ever rose or lily with a more exquisite hue?
With brighter tints of crimson, pink and white?
Was ever sky-line painted a deeper shade of blue
Than the eyes through which my baby sees the light?

Every morning by the nursemaid he is trundled through
the park,
Where the dewdrops sprinkle diamonds in his hair,
And the sunbeams through the treetops with his
dimples have a lark,
And the loungers on the benches claim a share.
Now his chubby fists are digging corrugations in the
air;
And his rosy heels are sparring with the breeze;
His cooing, crowing treble can be heard across the
square,
As he interviews the morning at his ease.

Aye, the pavement in his empire and his carriage is
his throne,
The passing throng his subjects to command;
He's the reigning prince potential that rules his realm
alone,
With the scepter of his beauty for a wand.

A DREAM.

A dewy freshness filled the air,
A spicy fragrance tanged the breeze,
That, wanton, wandered here and there,
A whispering vagrant 'mong the trees.

The verdure of the ripened spring
Hung motionless on bough and spray;
The gray owl sought, on stealthy wing,
The leaf-draped covert of his prey.

And I had wandered far, and lay
On mossy bank, 'neath sheltering bough;
Life's vexing cares seemed far away,
And slumberous breezes fanned my brow.

A dream that was but half a dream,
So mixed were all its scenes with truth,
So real did its fictions seem,
That age went straightway back to youth.

My thin gray locks were changed to brown,
And clustered on a boyish brow;
Youth's empire sat me like a crown,
And gave to age its parting bow.

A blithesome parting, not one thought
Of vain regret on either side;
Youth grasped the scepter Fortune brought,
Age faltered, fainting, and so died.

THE PROMISES OF YESTERDAY.

There is not now, nor can there be,
For you and me felicity
So perfect and so full of joys
As when together, happy boys,
We roamed the woods and fields among,
And heard the songs the blackbirds sung,
As, winging it from tree to tree,
They filled our ears with melody.
And our young hearts, so light and free,
With joy akin to ecstasy;
How well I yet recall the hours
Midst waving trees and bright wild flowers,
Neath autumn skies of azure blue,
With you, dear friend, and only you,
To roam, and from each pleasure sip
The sweet, rich wine of comradeship.
Oh, loyal friend, and can it be
That life's the sport of destiny?
That these bent forms and locks of gray,
Are but the ghost of yesterday?
The yesterday of vanished youth,
When life was joy in very truth,
And not the dross that now it is;
But radiant with promises,
And pledges that, alas, for me,
Were false as wreckers' lights at sea;
For bankrupt time will never pay
The promises of yesterday.

TOM SETRIGHT'S FRIENDS.

Tom Setright had as many friends
As any man in town;
In fact, he had so many friends
That he was wont to frown,
And say, he thought if he
Had fewer friends it would redound
To his prosperity;
For Tom was not a wealthy man,
Though fairly well to do,
And he set a first-rate table,
A fact his friends all knew;
And knowing which they needs must think,
Where favors flowed so free,
'Twas only fair that they should share
His hospitality.
They came on all occasions;
Evening party, ball and rout;
And if Setright had dark secrets,
They never found him out,
For he met them on his threshold,
With a smile of welcome warm,
And his latchstring was the only thing
He left out in the storm.
His face was always wreathed in smiles,
His callers to receive;
And the self-same smile did duty
When they came to take their leave.
And Tom had sons and daughters,
And *they* all had *their* friends,
And they flocked to Tom's snug quarters
Like pigeons to the fens;
And still Tom smiled with pleasure,
Reassuring every guest;

And his eyes spoke hearty welcome,
Plain as ever words expressed;
But his smiles had limitations,
And they struck the limit strong,
When his children's friends brought *their* friends
To multiply the throng.

BILL SLOCUM, STAR WITNESS.

Bill Slocum was a stalwart
Of good old Southern stock,
He stood six foot in his stockings,
And was solid as a rock;
He was slow of speech and action,
Always frugal of his words,
Language had too much attraction,
He said, to throw at birds.

Six days of every seven
Bill was sober as a priest,
But all the saints in heaven
Could not keep him from his feast
Of mountain dew on Saturday,
When he'd make the welkin ring;
And everybody had to say
'Twas good to hear him sing.

Though his singing was delightful,
It was not Bill Slocum's, forte,
For he only sang when quite full;
'Twas as witness in the court
That his genius reached its zenith,
Like the kingly eagle's flight;
There his answers were the keenest,
And his gestures a delight.

His fame as a court witness
Spread like road dust in the Fall;
And his peculiar fitness
Was recognized by all;
And they argued from his fitness,
That no trial could be fair
Unless Bill, as the star witness,
Occupied the witness chair.

Time passed, then came the climax,
Down at old Tom Soper's store,
Where the boys were playing high-jacks
And Bill Slocum kept the score;
The old brown store was lighted
From the basement to the roof,
And the drink that no one slighted
Was some seventeen hundred proof.

Deep they drank, and all were jolly,
Till a chap from Soapstone Run,
In exuberance of folly,
Got to flourishing his gun;
Then somebody hit the gun-man,
And the gun-man's friend hit him;
Whereupon the crowd as one man
Were all in fighting trim.

Then heads were cracked like walnuts,
And fierce fighting filled the place;
While scratches, bites and small cuts
Disfigured many a face;
And they kept it up for hours,
With sore heads and twisted spines;
But there were no funeral flowers,
Save the buds that gild these lines.

Now this scandalized the pulpit,
And the preacher thought he saw
A way to cleanse this foul pit,
By appealing to the law;
So he had them all arrested,
As he did not need their vote,
And had the matter tested
By a jury in the cote.

When the case came on for hearing,
The town was there en masse;
Country people were appearing
From mountain and morass;
Now where was William Slocum?
No one ever knew him late;
He was there, and by that token,
He was witness for the State.

As to the wisdom of his call,
The church had much to say;
But it was passing clear to all
That 'twas Bill's red-letter day;
The State's attorney squared his chest,
And looked inquiringly
At Bill, who in his Sunday best
Made a witness good to see.

"Tell His Honor and the jury,
Mr. Slocum, what you know
Of this fight conceived in fury,
Speak distinctly and go slow;
We take the fact as granted
That you were on the ground;"
"Yes," slowly answered, William,
"I was thar, jest sloshin' 'round."

“And further it is granted,
If not so, you’ll set me right;”
Bill’s eyes were on him slanted,
“Being there you saw the fight.”
“Neouw, Colonel, you are ’way off,
Of co’se I’ll set you right,
From the facts we must not stray off,
Fur I didn’t see no fight.”

“Now, William, I’m astonished!
There, and yet no fight you saw;
You will have to be admonished
That you’re in a court of law;
But tell us now what ’tis you mean
By only ‘sloshing round;’
If you’re not careful ’twill be seen
You’re treading slippery ground.”

“Neouw, Colonel, you have hit the trail;
I kin answer that all right;
I jest had a half a fence-rail,
Swatting everyone in sight;
But jest the same, I’ll always claim,
I didn’t see no fight.”

THE PATIENT FISHERMAN.

Roses, roses, red and white,
Flowers that give my soul delight;
Southwind laden with perfume,
Millpond and the old mill's flume;
Schoolhouse farther up the hill,
Looking down upon the mill;
Children playing in the road;
Teamster with his lumber load;
Woodthrush singing in the hedge;
Hedge that skirts the mill pond's edge;—
Scenes like these are in my view,
And have been the morning through.
What I'm doing here is just
Fishing. I was red with rust;
Had not had a good day's fishing,
For a year of ardent wishing;
So I got an early start
From the city's crowded mart;
Now I'm here with line thrown out,
Hoping soon to land a trout;
And I've fished, and fished, and fished,
Just precisely as I wished;
Fished in fact with all my might,
Without a nibble or a bite.
Patience at this point comes in,
Without which no one can win;
Patience, patience, devil-scorned;
I have patience, fresh and corned;—
Have in fact a lot to spare,
Glad to send it anywhere:
And I'm here to show the world
Patience with her flag unfurled;
And, if nothing interposes,
I'll be here among the roses,

Harking to the night bird's song,
Fishing steady right along,
Heedless of the morrow's call,—
Patient though the heavens fall.

WEE ELIZABETH.

I know a little blue-eyed maid,
So bright and fair that I'm afraid
Her charms and graces to parade
 Before the public gaze;
And yet, forsooth, I needs must sing,
As wild birds in balmy spring,
When they have found some rare bright thing
 Fit to inspire their lays.

Her cheeks have that exquisite glow
That sunset's spendors backward throw
On drifted banks of spotless snow,
 Fresh fallen from the skies;
And spring's first, fairest violet,
Sun-kissed, and with the night dews wet,
May yet a deeper luster get
 From my wee maid's blue eyes.

And then her silken, soft, brown hair,
Fine as spun gold, or flosses rare,
Crowning a brow, like lilies fair,
 With pale tints of the rose.
No tongue can tell, no pen can write,
The varied charms of this wee sprite;
And she's her old Grandpa's delight,
 As everybody knows.

THE SONGS JOE DENNY SANG.

I want to hear Joe Denny sing
The songs he sung of yore,
When we was comrades, soldiering,
Back thirty years or more;
I want to jest set down, by gum,
Lay back, and hear him sing
Them same old songs he sung so well,
From harvest time till Spring.

Some folks may think I'm partial
'Bout my music, don't you know,
And intimate that other folks
Can sing, as well as Joe;
But I know what variety
Of music pleases me,
And Denny's songs jest fill the bill
In style and quality.

Lord love us! What a voice he had
For singin', high or low;
And how he used to make us sad,
With "Twenty Years Ago;"
Or "Hard Times Come Again No More,"
And "Comin' Through the Rye;"
And sweet and sad "Lorena,"
Would almost make us cry.

I'm mighty short of cash sometimes
Since youth and health is gone;
In pint of fact, my pension is
'Bout all I'm bankin' on,
But if I owned a mine of gold,
And wore a diamond ring,
I'd give up every nickel,
Jest to hear Joe Denny sing.

THE ROAD TO GOOD HOPE TOWN.

At the foot of the hill where the road trails down
O'er sunny slopes to Good Hope Town,
A weather-beaten guide-post stands,
Like a long-armed man, with outstretched hands,
And one gaunt finger, blurred and brown,
Pointing the way to Good Hope Town.

This veteran guide hath long withstood
The winter frost and vernal flood;
While summer heat and autumn rain
Have sought his ruin long in vain;
But still upon his time-scarred face,
In faded-lettered words we trace
His message that all eyes may read—
"One mile to Good Hope, and Godspeed."

Few roads there are in the wide maze
Of streets and lanes and broad highways,
Whose guide-post bears its face upon
Directions and a benison;
This message, brief, unique, and quaint,
Appeals to sinner and to saint,
Nor saint nor sinner need to stray
For want of guide to point the way.

It's always just a space beyond,
Where hope's bright gleam life's road shines on;
And few, alas! have strength and grace,
Or time to overcome that space.
Though friends may fail us and deceive,
And life run counter to our will,
Hope's promises we still believe,
And where they lead we follow still;

The guide's gaunt finger points the way,
Heedless of fortune's smile or frown;
Only the blind will go astray—
Our road leads straight to Good Hope Town.

CONNIE BELL.

Sweet Connie Bell, the Vansville meadows
Grow white beneath a summer sky,
And in the glen the lights and shadows
Along your path in dappled meshes lie.
The wood-thrush, in his song, grows tender,
As your soft foot-fall mingles with his trill,
And he essays his sweetest songs to render
In homage to your beauty and good-will.

The elder bloom in creamy luster
Droops over banks where sweet magnolias spring;
The chinquapin, in tasseled cluster,
The thrush's song, the brook's low murmuring,
Pay willing tribute to your beauty,
While your sweet presence works its spell.
All nature smiles as if it were a duty
To lavish gifts upon sweet Connie Bell.

Thus sings the minstrel in his bower,
And thus the breezes whisper of her charms,
While Connie, all unconscious of her power,
Sees but the sheaf of daisies in her arms.
And, bending low her dainty head to listen
For welcome steps that come not to the spot,
Two pearly tears upon her fair cheeks glisten.
She sighs, "The daisies say, 'He loves me not!'" "

JOE GOREM'S PHILOSOPHY.

Joe Gorem leaned against the fence
To rest his weary back;
Joe Gorem was a man of sense,
Though just a trifle slack;
And the method of his farming
Was on the narrow track.

And as you passed his homestead,
You could see with half an eye,
That thrift and Joe were strangers
To each other; and just why
This state of things existed
Was as plain as rust on rye.

His gates were off their hinges;
The bar-posts leaned apart;
His plow and drag stood in the field
As if about to start;
While the sum of Joseph's rolling stock
Had dwindled to one cart.

His domicile was shabby;
Decay seemed in advance;
The doors showed yawning panels
Which gave the winds a chance;
And broken panes were reinforced
By wads of Joe's old pants.

This order of disorder
Pervaded the whole place;
But it did not cloud the sunny smile
That beamed on Joseph's face;
Nor did the rush of seed time
Disturb his even pace.

For Joe possessed a theory
By love of ease inspired,
That the way to relish labor
Is to rest before you're tired;
And to demonstrate this theory
Was the work Joe most admired.

And when his work would crowd him,
As it always did in spring,
He'd find the soft side of a rail,
And there he'd sit and sing,
Regardless of the cares of life,
As happy as a king.

And this was his philosophy,
As well as I recall,
At least the substance of it,
Minus, of course, the drawl
Attending its delivery,
The winks and nods and all.

"I don't see why Dame Natur',
In the wisdom of her plan,
Didn't fix it so that craps would grow
Without the help of man;
'Twould be a credit to her
And exactly to my han'.

"I'm opposed to this here notion
O bein' always on a strain;
If you've got to work yourself to death
To raise a little grain,
You'd better do without it;
That's a proposition plain.

“Now a weed will grow as thrifty
In a patch of corn or rye,
Unpestered by its neighbors,
Unteched by hessian fly,
Or any other bug, or bird,
That makes the farmer sigh.

“But corn to du just fairly well
Must be planted so and so;
The ground in prime condition;
Well worked with plow and hoe;
And then as like as anyway,
The dratted stuff won't grow.

“If rain and Heaven's sunshine
Won't produce a decent crap,
With favorable conditions,
Nussed right in Nature's lap,
Why, it's time, in my opinion,
To let the business drap.

“I could go ahead and reason
Till the craps are all laid by,
On the logic of my theory,
The wherefore and the why;
But it wouldn't pay the trouble,
And therefore I won't try.

“If I had the vim and energy
Of an earthquake or cyclone,
I'd git an early start, and whip
Old Mother Earth alone;
But it's too big an undertakin'
For a man of common bone.

“So I’m content to live, and let
The Earth be as I found it;
It wouldn’t pay for me to try
To build a fence around it;
I’d sooner take your word about
The sea than try to sound it.

“It’s true my craps are meager,
My potatoes few and small;
And my neighbors often wonder
I raise anything a ’tall;
But I’ll bet I’m just as happy
As the thriftiest of them all.”

MRS. JOE GOREM.

Mrs. Joe Gorem was plump, fair and thirty—
Its a guess at her age, it may have been more—
For so long had she warred upon everything dirty
’Twas hard for a neighbor to fathom the score.
Her vigor and zeal in the cause she had chosen
Was only surpassed by the strength of her will,
From daylight at morn when she put her war clothes on
Until bedtime at night she never was still.
Her dust-pan and broom she always kept near her,
She brushed every atom of dust from the place,
Small insects and flies had all come to fear her,
With her, filth and dirt were a housewife’s disgrace.
Her kitchen-ware shone like Truth in a fable;
Her broom was a broadsword, its sweep was immense,
She swept the yard clean from the house to the stable
And then, if ’twas fair, she would white-wash the
fence.

Her clothes on the line were as white as the whitest;
She did her own wash, though the boiler would leak,
Her smiles on wash-day were always the brightest,
And the wads in the windows she washed twice a week.
She wore her floors thin by incessant scrubbing,
For hard oil and wax she would spare no expense,
If Joe brought in mud he was due for a drubbing,
Which accounts for his penchant to sing on the fence.
She was innocent quite of logic and theory,
To Joe's long harangues she would turn a deaf ear,
And silence his guns with this pertinent query:
"How prosper the weeds in your cornfield, my dear?"
Though Joe's shiftless ways drove her sometimes half
crazy
She never complained of the galls of her yoke,
She always stopped short of calling him lazy,
A fact which the neighbors considered a joke.
She was queen of the place, good natured and thorough,
And Joe never questioned the scope of her sway,
It rested his back to defer 'till tomorrow
The work which demanded performance today.
If Joe faltered some when his farm work would crowd
him,
If he side-stepped the duties that met him in life,
He still had the virtues that Nature allowed him,
And fate had vouchsafed him an excellent wife.

PERPLEXITY.

I am come where two high-roads cross one another,
And I pause to consider the way,
Like a child who has strayed from his mother
And is lost at the close of day.

Though a bright sky is smiling above me,
And calm is the midsummer noon,
I'm far from the dear ones who love me,
And the night will have come all too soon.

The road I have fared o'er was rugged and dreary,
Pitfall and precipice ambushed my feet;
Now at high noon I am footsore and weary,
And I'd barter my pack for a morsel to eat.

Strange there is no one to give me my bearings,
No hand to point out the way for my feet;
After a morn on the road I've been faring,
Any one's counsel to me would be sweet.

Life it is said is full of its crosses,
And the proverb holds good, at least in my case,
For mine has been checkered with crosses and losses,
And now comes a cross-road to frown in my face.

But here 'neath this tree on a couch of sweet heather,
I'll slumber and dream back the hopes that have
 flown;
My sleep will be restful, thanks to the weather,
And waking, it may be the way will be shown.

THE PAUPER'S PLEA.

I want no man or woman's pity,
I only ask fair play;
A chance to earn in this great city
Wherewith to pay my way.
The vigor of my arm has left me,
I can not labor more;
Old-age and want have quite bereft me
Of all save hunger sore.
This gnawing at my vitals tells me
That food is what I crave;
The want of bread almost compels me
To steal, and cheat the grave;
Too proud to beg, my mortal nature
Revolts at crime; what then can I,
The most abject of all God's creatures,
Do, but starve and die?
There must be, oh! there must be something
That such as I can do;
Some task half-done its place encumbering
That I may carry through.
The meanest work, I care not how degrading,
So it be honest—anything;
Not pity, but for mercy I am pleading;
Can you not see I am famishing?

BETTY WARDEN, A SONG.

Sweet Betty Warden, must the sun
Go down tonight upon your wrath?
Will that cold frown upon your brow
Forever shroud my lonely path?
Can roses bloom and wild birds sing
While that dark cloud obscures my skies?
While love's sweet hopes lie withering
And tears unshed bedim mine eyes?
Sweet Betty Warden, nature's smile
Has warmed the earth to springtime bloom.
Will not your own my heart beguile,
Dispelling all its wintry gloom?
Let your sweet lips breathe one kind word,
One smile to cure my sorrowing;
Then hope as buoyant as a bird
Would heavenward rise on lightest wing.

THE WINE OF SONG.

That blithe inebriate, the thrush,
Drunk of his own song's wine,
Goes swaggering from tree to bush,
From bush to trailing vine;
And everywhere his swelling throat
Pours forth sweet melody;
I drinking deep in every note,
Am soon as drunk as he.
Then the power his song discovers,
Lifts me reeling from the sod,
We're a pair of tipsy lovers,
He the minstrel, I the clod;
But one passion makes us brothers,
Each with music for his God.

ON THE ROAD TO NORRIS.

On the road to Norris,
In the springtime of the year,
When the hawthorne trees are blooming
And the thrush is singing clear;
When the roses by the wayside
Shed their fragrance on the breeze,
Oh, its on the road to Norris,
Are a thousand things to please.

On the road to Norris,
When the great clock in the tower
Peals forth its twilight vespers
Like a singer of great power;
When its deep reverberations,
Stir the blossoms on the trees,
Oh, its on the road to Norris,
There is everything to please.

On the road to Norris,
In youth's illusive prime,
When all the year is summer,
And we know no winter time;
Then all the slopes are sunny,
And it's joy to go or stay,
For the bonnie road to Norris
Leads straight from care away.

SORROW'S SADDEST DAY.

In the thick of worldly trouble,
When the murky clouds of care
Seem to frown upon us double,
And thick darkness everywhere
Closes gloomily about us,
Shutting out hopes' cheering ray;
When even friends may doubt us—
That is sorrow's saddest day.

When in retrospect we linger
Over pleasure of the past,
And fate's relentless finger
Points to joys too bright to last;
When hopes still lack fruition,
And fond ones from us stray;
When we miss true Love's elysian—
That is sorrow's saddest day.

ON THE TRAIL OF "DORIAN DAYS."

(RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO ITS AUTHOR.)

After a rapturous hour spent reading sweet "Dorian
Days,"

I am camped on the trail of the singer while he trills his
matchless lays,

And, gloated and gloating, I ponder, but hang on the
trail like a hound,

That would carry it hither and yonder, hot-foot, with
his nose to the ground.

Though I blink in the glow of his numbers yet spurred
by the warmth of desire,

Impelled by a hope that ne'er slumbers, which carries
me higher and higher;

Till bare-headed I stand on the summit while the trail
stretches on to its goal,

And exulting I shout, "I have won it," the needle
points true to the pole.

I see with unerring prevision the foot-prints the poet has
made,

Where he rises from earth to elysium, where the feet of
the Masters have strayed;

So I backtrack the trail to the poet, refreshed by his
exquisite lays:

I'm in love, and the whole world may know it, in love
with sweet "Dorian Days."

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

Out in the sunshine, the shadows behind me,
The mists and the gloom of the pine-sheltered way,
Full in the sunlight of hope to remind me
That life has its bright skies as well as its gray.

The pathway was long and the pathway was dreary,
And shadows fell thick where my footsteps would
stray;
No flowers blooming bright, and no birds singing
cheery,
To drive from my lone path the shadows away.

But hope springs anew with the glow of the morning,
And faith has rekindled its fires in my heart;
The sun's cheering rays the bright skies adorning
Have banished the gloom that the shadows impart.

Thus shadow and shine with each life are blended,
Thus joy and despondency each has its day;
But care's darkest hour by sweet hope attended
Will pass like the mists of the morning away.

HIGHLAND MARY.

How we all linger lovingly,
And o'er each fond word tarry;
Read and reread, approvingly,
The song of Highland Mary.

And how an eager ear we turn
To hear the minstrel's praises.
Of that fair scene, its braes and burn,
Its lavrocks midst the daisies.

Where Bonny Doon and Logan's braes,
And Afton's crystal river;
Where Ayr pursues its pebbled ways,
Through scenes that charm us ever.

We turn with brimming eyes to see
The poet and his dearie,
And hear his vows of constancy
When parting with his Mary:

The pathos of that parting hour
Will never cease to grieve us,
Nor time make less its subtle power
To chasten and bereave us.

That song of songs itself will sing,
While lovers, loving tarry
Beside that song-inspiring spring,
That gave us Highland Mary.

Great master of the singer's art,
Your flights did never vary;
You touched the universal heart
In singing Highland Mary.

MY CASTLE BY THE SPRING.
(AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO R. M. D.)

I have lingered for an hour
By the willow-shaded spring,
Where my lady had her bower
In the days when I was king—
When I reigned a monarch there,
In my castle by the spring,
O'er a realm some six feet square,
'Neath its green-boughed sheltering.

O'er our heads the willow sprays,
Like her harp strings caught the breeze;
In the grapevine's tangled maze
Wild birds sang sweet melodies.
Song of bird and scent of flower
Wafted there on zephyr's wing—
To my lady's vine-wreathed bower
In our castle by the spring.

Love-lit eyes of tender blue,
Rosy lips and teeth of pearl;
With a heart as leal and true
To her king as steel to pole;
Fair as springtime's rarest flower,
Graceful form and regal mein;
In or out her vine-wreathed bower,
She was every inch a queen.

O the raptures of that reign!
O the joyous blissful then!
Memory, not unmixed with pain,
Will recall those hours again:
But alas how brief were they,
And alas for time's cold frown;
Now my lady's locks are gray,
And her king has lost his crown.

OLD GLORY.

Now let Old Glory's silken folds
 Upon the morning breeze float free;
While bugle's note and war drum's roll
 Call men to arms from sea to sea.
Stream out, proud banner, on the wind,
In every hero's heart enshrined!

The tide of war that rises now
 Will stand at flood till every stain
Of martyred blood is blotted from
 The riven wreckage of the Maine!
Float out, proud banner, brave and free!
The hero's guide to victory!

From every fortress by the sea,
 On every mast and spar
Of battleships, a token be
 Of victory in war.
Proud banner, float! Old Glory, wave!
O'er serried ranks of free men brave!

Now let the haughty Spaniard feel
 The lightning of our long-pent wrath;
The bolt that belches fire and steel
 Will sweep the tyrant from its path.
Wave, wave, Old Glory, proud and free!
And perish Spanish tyranny!

THE OREGON.

Back to our shores comes the Oregon!
Brave old ship, with her warpaint on;
Stripped to her decks, and ready to take
The foe's assault for her country's sake.
Ready to take, and eager to give
Her last man's life that the right may live,
Pride of the North, with her warpaint on;
Back to her home comes the Oregon.

Arduous voyage through perils grim;
Back to our shores in fighting trim;
Ready to take her place in line,
'Gainst hostile fleet or hidden mine.
Woe, woe to the foe that crosses her path
And stands in the way of her righteous wrath!
For back to our shores she comes head on,
Then hail to the good ship, Oregon!

TWO MURDERS.

The rumble of a wagon
Along a lonely road,
Its weary driver, half asleep
Upon his heavy load.

A tramp with fiendish purpose,
A weapon gleaming bright,
A struggle in the roadway,
A murder in the night.

A flight, a capture, prison bars,
A trial ne'er to be;
A midnight mob beneath the stars,
The tramp—eternity.

HEROES EIGHT.

I'm here to say, and I don't care,
Who hears me, that to play it fair
And make earned honors even—
That when eight men a scheme prepare
And execute it then and there,
No one should take the lion's share,
And rob the other seven.

Nor do I think it's Hobson's choice,
And none will ever hear his voice
Proclaim the honor his.
For modesty will ever be
The running mate of bravery,
A gallant sailor such as he
Is all that honor is.

And so I'll sing the whole brave eight,
Whose deed of valor closed the gate
That bars the Spaniards' way;
And honor to our Yankee tars
Whose business is to watch the bars
'Neath noonday sun or midnight stars
In Santiago Bay!

JOHN HAY.

What we desire to say, John Hay,
Is welcome back to America!

Your own, your native land.
And we to you this tribute pay,
We're all as proud of you, John Hay,
As you are of America;
And you're to lead the band,

And help to guide the ship of state
Among the shoals and rocks that grate
Upon her ample keel.
Like Bludso, of the Prairie Belle,
We know you'll do your duty well—
E'en court the fate that him befell
To serve the nation's weal.

Like that immortal engineer,
Whose name and fame we all revere
And cherish like your own,
You'll do your duty as premier,
Bandmaster or chief engineer,
And serve your country better here
Than "loafing round a throne."

And so we say again, John Hay,
Welcome back to America,
The land that gave you birth!
And what we've said, we'll always say,
We're just as proud of you, John Hay,
As you are of America,
The fairest land on earth.

THE TRAMP'S PHILOSOPHY.

Yes, boss; I'm a tramp, there's no dodging that,
For this seedy old coat and time-battered hat
Would give me away, if nothing else would,
For it's many a day since either was good.
They just hang together, as you will discover,
Like the whisky-swelled, rum-decayed carcass they
cover;

Yet, bad as they are, they're good enough quite
For a bed in the ditch—besides they are light
In texture, at least, if dingy in hue,
And they stay with me better than if they were new.
For, if I could buy rum by the sale of my coat,
I would rob my old back to moisten my throat.
As it is, I must keep them, though thirsty I am,
For my wardrobe complete is not worth a dram.
My shamelessness shocks you, but, Mister, you see,
I'm not troubled by shame in the slightest degree.
There's no shame without pride, and it's true, as I
think,
Pride's the first thing one parts with when taking to
drink.

But I rub along without shame, without pride,
And, I fear, without most other virtues beside.
I'm sure I can't see what an old tramp like me
Can be wanting with virtues, many or few.
They would not buy rum, and I've no disposition,
At my time of life, to turn politician.
I would do without both if I had but the tin,
Let the rich have the virtues, I'll take the gin.
I have not been always the wreck you see now;
Time was when true manhood was stamped on my
brow;

And proudly erect I moved mid the throng
In rectitude earnest, in chastity strong;

Enriched by the love of a pure trusting wife,
My child's fond caress gave a zest to my life;
But the demon that tempted my lips with the bowl
Soon darkened my Eden and blighted my soul.
Gone, gone, all are gone, and I wander alone,
With senses benumbed, and heart turned to stone;
Too weak for regret, at eternity's brink
With but one passion left—a craving for drink.

AT THE PLAY.

I saw her as she entered,
And a chill went up my spine,
While my spirits dropped to zero
 With a thud.
For she wore upon her dainty head,
In plumes and ribbons fine,
A hat that fairly paralyzed
 My blood.

I knew no power existed,
Either human or divine,
That could reach the charming creature
 Where she sat.
And though I vainly twisted
My neck like wrapping twine,
The world to me was blank beyond
 That hat.

Profanity is futile
In moments such as these,
And I nursed my wrath in silence
 Where I sat.
In the shadow of her plumage,
Dense as leaves upon the trees,
Oblivious to anything
 But hat.

NEXT DOOR.

Next door to where the Parson lived,
A sinner dwelt,

A sinner, yet with arts so sly,
So full of arch hypocrisy,
That men would count his virtues o'er,
Disparaging the saint next door.

His genial smile bespoke good will
To all mankind. The poor might fill
Their empty stomachs from its store,
If smiles could feed the hungry poor.

He beamed on every passer-by;
His neighbor's woes would make him sigh;
His heart seemed generous to the core;
He little gave, but promised more.

A shivering wight, one bitter night,
Paused at his door in sorrow plight;
He gave her smiles, but nothing more,
Then bade her seek for alms next door.

"I'm perishing with cold," she said;
"I'm hungry—give me food," she plead;
"The way was long; my feet are sore;"
He said, "There's food and fire next door."

Some day he'll die, and go to—well,
That bourne from whence none comes to tell
The mysteries of that unknown shore,
Which from this world is but next door.

His shivering ghost will roam through space,
To meet St. Peter face to face,
Who'll smile, and point his shoulder o'er,
"You'll find a red-hot fire next door."

A SAINTLY SINNER.

He was a sinner, but he loved
With all the ardor of a saint;
He loved his children and his wife
And all his friends without restraint.
He had his failings manifold,
Some of them measured up to vice;
But if you wanted a good turn,
You never had to ask him twice.

Peculiar in his views, 'twas said;
Set in his ways he may have been;
But count the hungry he has fed—
Count them, they'll keep his memory green.
He never staid his hand to ask
Why are you poor, why so distressed?
He gave the alms he had to give,
And left the saints to do the rest.

A sinner with so kind a heart,
That little children at their play
Would pause and give him smile for smile,
To cheer the sinner on his way.
He was a sinner self-confessed,
For that we have to take his word;
And yet his eyes would overflow
With tears when shown a wounded bird.

I would not palliate his sins,
Nor for his follies plead excuse;
For well I know with half the world
The plea would be of little use.
So call him sinner, call him saint,
He played at least a generous part;
And though his sins were manifold
The sinner had a saintly heart.

A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

Christmas time is here again!
Christmas, with its joyous train.
Sing a song with love's refrain,
 Christmas time is here.
Fill our hearts with charity,
Let good will and hope flow free,
And the poorest hovel be
 Filled with Christmas cheer.

Let the wealthy of our land
Freely give, with generous hand;
And our doors wide open stand
 To the needy poor.
Lift the weary brother's load,
Light the traveler on his road.
Rich the gift, if love bestowed,
 Poor howe'er the store.

Peace and plenty fill the land!
Bountiful the Father's hand!
Grateful we, the Christmas Band,
 Sing our Christmas lay!
Make us thankful, make us brave,
Strong to bear, like Him who gave
His dear life the world to save.
 Welcome, Christmas Day!

THE PATH THAT LEADS FROM CARE.

I long to find a path some day,
A path that leads from care away,
 Whither I should not heed;
A day when spring is in its prime,
And heart and foot with path keep time;
When breeze and trees with ease make rhyme;
 That would be joy, indeed.

I'd love to hear the woodthrush song
Come echoing that path along;
 To greet me on my way;
And that sweet minstrel of the hedge,
The catbird, too, would chant his pledge
That he'd be singing in the sedge,
 Let skies be bright or gray.

I'd stop to hear the whole sweet band
Of feathered songsters, and would stand
 Uncovered at their glee;
Charmed with the color of their coats,
I'd watch the swelling of their throats,
And drink the music of their notes,
 Poured forth in ecstasy.

And when the path had reached the spring,
Where mint and fern grew clustering,
 I'd linger in the shade;
'Neath low-bent branches of the trees,
I'd breathe the wild-flower-scented breeze,
And watch the flight of birds and bees,
 Through sun-flecked mossy glade.

What restful peace to weary brain!
What solace to the stress and strain
Of long-enduring man!
I'd love to pass a lifetime there,
Breathing the health-inspiring air,
Beyond the reach of that black care
Left where the path began.

PROBLEMS.

All my life I've tried to solve
Problems far beyond my powers;
Some I've wrestled with so long
That I've wasted precious hours.

Still the problems ever come
With a fixed persistency;
Heaven only knows where from
Or why they should come to me

They should go to wiser heads,
Heads with trained and cogent brains;
Not to me, whose spirit dreads
Every task involving pains.

Other worriments I've known;
Fortune's frowns I've met with smiles;
And there's something to atone
For the stretch of weary miles.

I've been called upon to fare
O'er a rough and dreary road;
But problems, I declare,
Are for me too great a load.

Figures? O ye Gods be kind;
Hide them ever from my sight;
Blow their columns to the wind,
Lest they drive me mad outright.

For I'd rather climb a pole
On the bleakest winter day,
Than to torture my poor soul
With a sum in algebra.

All in vain I've tried to drive
These enigmas from my brain;
But alas, they only thrive,
And return to me again.

Then stow them under hatches,
Battened down with pitch and glue;
My brain is worn to patches
With the worry I've been through.

Keep them hidden from the light,
Waft them far away from me;
Then some dark and stormy night
Cast them all into the sea.

IF I WERE RICH.

If I were rich, as I am not,
I'd give to every little tot
I met with, money on the spot;
 To me'twould be a boon;
And if I owned the universe,
With untold millions to disburse,
Though times were bad and growing worse,
 I'd buy the child the moon!

I never see a little tad
But what I feel as if I had
A heart as young if not as glad
 And joyous as his own.
And I should like to put behind
Me life's dull cares, and go it blind,
For just one day, in hopes to find
 My childhood that is gone.

There's no great merit, I opine,
In this child-loving trait of mine,
Nor do I care by it to shine;
 But, somehow all the same,
I can't help wishing, when I see
The boys go fishing without me,
That I from work and care were free,
 To join them in their game.

As I grow older, and my years
Grow fewer in this vale of tears,
I fain would cast aside the fears
 And doubts my life beset;
And go where little children play,
With all my sorrows laid away.
And with them pass my latest day,
 Forgetful of regret.

"THE PASTURAGE OF NOBLE MINDS."

The pasturage of noble minds,
Green fields of thought where reason finds
Luxuriant feed;
Where Research browses on the green
Life-giving herbs of Truth's demesne,
Where pagans grope and sages glean,
And martyrs bleed.

Where Emerson and wise Carlyle,
From their bright home look down and smile
Approvingly;
Where Avon's bard, and Milton, bring
Their harps and to the ages sing,
And drink at that truth-welling spring,
Whence song flows free.

Song-haunted shores of mountain lakes,
Where Wordsworth's lyre his country wakes
To ecstasy;
And Southey's classic numbers fill
The heart with joy or grief at will,
And Coleridge is dreaming still,
Perplexedly.

Realm of the hero of romance,
Of battered shield and ribboned lance,
Of knight and squire;
Where Lancelot maid Elaine finds,
And Arthur's court resplendent shines;—
The pasturage of noble minds
Methinks is there.

THE CHINQUAPIN.

Be kind, O Fate, and let me in
The field where grows the chinquapin;
Dear spot remembered well.
Oh haste, kind Fate, fling wide the gate,
Let me come in and satiate
My sense of smell.

No other flower, tho' flowers abound
(In every field they light the ground
As truth illumines sin),
Could have that subtle power to bring
Remembrance of a vanished spring
Like thee, sweet chinquapin.

'Twas then thy tasseled creamy plumes
Shed on the breeze their rich perfumes,
And May was drawing near,
With spicy gales and wild birds' croon,
To meet her rose-crowned sister June,
The flower queen of the year.

A cloudless sky shone overhead,
A moss-edged path with wild flowers spread
Trailed soft beneath our feet;
The story that will ne'er grow old
By fervent lips again was told
In accents sweet.

Ah me, it seems but yesterday,
And yet dark locks are turned to gray
Since those enchanted hours;
And joyous scenes that field within
Have made thee, modest chinquapin,
For me, the queen of flowers.

RETROSPECTION.

When the long day's toil is over,
And the soft gray shadows fall;
When beneath the porch-vine's cover,
In my chair, apart from all.

In the calm midsummer's gloaming,
Harking to the cricket's chirr,
My wayward thoughts go roaming
Backward to the days that were.

Oh! the days that were, the days that were!
There's something in the cricket's chirr
That smooths the way for memory,
Recalling joys that used to be.

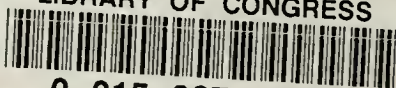
I see through dimming mists that rise
Above the half-forgotten ways,
Scenes once familiar to my eyes
Now lost in vanished yesterdays.

I see the pitfalls in the path
That instinct taught my feet to shun,
And sadly view youth's aftermath
Where shone the prize I never won.

There's little in this backward view
To cheer the road I've yet to tread;
The meagre pleasures that I knew,
Have all their brightest colors shed.

But when I hear the cricket's trill,
Old memories in my bosom stir;
And straightway, all against my will,
My thoughts review the days that were.



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